

"Celebrating 30 Years of Small Business Success"



November 24, 2014



Have a Tremendous Thanksgiving Holiday!

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Spotlight on Success – Bliss Bridal and Prom

Melanie DeVore turned a hobby into a successful enterprise with the help of the **Illinois Small Business Development Center (SBDC) at Kankakee Community College (KCC)**. Ms. DeVore had a healthcare career, but always loved weddings and party planning. To make extra income and begin her entrepreneurial journey she rented table and chair covers for weddings as a side job. She eventually expanded her side job into a full-time business, left her healthcare position, and opened Wedding Bells, a consignment shop, in Bourbonnais, Illinois. Wedding Bells rented everything from floral centerpieces to flower girl dresses.

"Business was booming, and I followed my instincts to grow," said Ms. DeVore. "When I had an opportunity to join the Wedding Center Bridal Boutique, an existing business, I knew it was the right fit." Even though Ms. DeVore had a business plan in place and was doing well, she couldn't secure the financing needed to move forward. A friend recommended she call **Ken Crite, director of the Illinois SBDC at KCC**.

"Ken was my savior," she said. "Not only did he review my business plan and set me up with an accountant, he found a bank to loan me the money I needed to grow to the next level." Ms. DeVore joined the Wedding Center in spring 2014. After adding prom wear to its repertoire, the business changed its name to Bliss Bridal and Prom.

"I am grateful for the help and connections I've made since contacting **KCC's Small Business Center**," said DeVore. "It's like having an entire team in my back pocket."

Learn more about Bliss Bridal and Prom at <https://www.facebook.com/Blissformals>



Maximizing Neoserra – Identifying Client Export Nations

Please be very careful when completing a profile for an Illinois SBDC ITC client for the first time. If you identify a client as an existing exporter, you must also choose at least one nation to which the client exports. Please be sure to enter the information correctly.

Valued Resources – Vertical Response Marketing

Vertical Response offers marketing advice, news, a blog, email generator and links to learn more about promoting a small business.

See more at: <http://www.verticalresponse.com/blog/25-holiday-marketing-tips-ideas/>

Network News and Moves

Small Business Saturday - #DineSmall - #ShopSmall

November 29th is [Small Business Saturday](#), an opportunity to support and celebrate your neighborhood retailers and restaurants. More than two out of three Americans are now aware that Small Business Saturday is a day devoted to shopping and dining small. Now in its fifth year, Small Business Saturday has become a critical day on the calendar for entrepreneurs to grow their customer base.

This year, we'll harness the power of social media to highlight the exemplary small businesses that make up our communities. Half of all holiday sales are now influenced by digital interactions. In 2013, two out of three shoppers purchased a gift found on social media. From the local clothing boutique with trendy fashion, to the book store that offers your favorite author, these businesses thrive when we bring business through their front doors.

Along with an exciting day of shopping, SBA Administrator Maria Contreras-Sweet Sweet encourages you to #DineSmall this "Small Business Saturday Night". This year, SBA is partnering with the National Restaurant Association to promote our local restaurants. Eating out on Small Business Saturday will emphasize the accomplishments of small business restaurants across the country while encouraging consumers to patronize eateries in their

neighborhoods. Nine out of 10 restaurants have less than 50 employees, and 80 percent of restaurant owners start their careers in entry-level positions. That's why this movement is an important new way to support our hard working food proprietors who give America's Main Street the tastes we love. The partnership will amplify restaurants during the national push to support our nation's small businesses on the busiest shopping weekend of the year.

SBA is a voice for small businesses and advocates on behalf of the more than 28 million small businesses. Make sure you let us know what you are doing, via social media, using [#SmallBizSaturday](#) [#ShopSmall](#) and [#DineSmall](#).

ManageHub Accelerator

The first ManageHub Accelerator for 2015 has just been announced. Applications are now being accepted and are due Wednesday, December 17. Business owners can sign up at www.ManageHub.info/accelerator. Please help us promote this resource by including in your email announcements. Illinois SBDCs are also encouraged to check it out and participate. Also, the ManageHub course is included in the Illinois SBDC's eLearning Center hosted by the Global Classrooms. Check it out.

2015 National Small Business Week Awards Nominations

The U.S. Small Business Administration Illinois District Office is proud to announce that SBA's online portal is ready to accept nominations for its 2015 National Small Business Week Awards, including the annual Small Business Person of the Year award.

SBA has been following the mantra - Smart, Bold and Accessible in the way the agency conducts business. This is now the third year SBA has been using the online portal submission process, a great and smart improvement from years past. The improved dedicated web portal <http://awards.sba.gov> provides all the guidelines and has made it much easier to submit and track submissions of nominees for National Small Business Week.

Since 1963, National Small Business Week has recognized the outstanding achievements of America's small businesses for their contributions to their local communities, and to our nation's economy. For over 50 years, SBA will continue its tradition in honoring the nation's 28 million small businesses.

SBA Awards given in celebration of National Small Business Week include the following awards:

- ***National Small Business Person of the Year (chosen from among state award winners from each of the 50 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, the U.S. Virgin Islands, and Guam)***
- ***Phoenix Awards (recognizing outstanding accomplishments during disaster recovery)***
- ***Small Business Prime Contractor of the Year***
- ***Small Business Subcontractor of the Year***
- ***The Dwight D. Eisenhower Award for Excellence (recognizes large prime contractors who have used small businesses as suppliers and contractors)***
- ***SBA 8(a) Graduate of the Year (for recent graduates of the SBA's 8(a) Business Development Program)***
- ***Exporter of the Year***
- ***Small Business Development Center (SBDC) Excellence and Innovation Award (nominations of SBA-funded SBDC Service Centers)***

- ***Women's Business Center (WBCs) of Excellence Award (nominations of SBA-funded WBCs)***
- ***Veterans Business Outreach Center Excellence in Service Award (nominations of SBA-funded Veterans Business Outreach Centers)***
- ***Small Business Investment Company of the Year***

All nominations must be submitted online, postmarked or hand delivered to the SBA no later than 3 p.m. EST, Monday, Jan. 5, 2015. In addition to the portal, nominations can also be sent directly to SBA's Illinois District Office – for contact information and other District Office information visit online at www.sba.gov , call 312-353-4528 or visit in person at 500 West Madison Street, Suite 1150 Chicago, IL 60661-2511.

America's SBDC Network Connect

Please [CLICK HERE](#) to see the latest edition of the [America's SBDC Network Connect Newsletter](#).

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The **WEEKLY CONNECTION** is distributed by the Illinois SBDC and DCEO Office of Entrepreneurship, Innovation & Technology each Monday to members of the DCEO Illinois SBDC Network to provide the service delivery partners with regular updates on small business issues, opportunities and resources. You may send any information to share with the Illinois SBDC Network to Tom.Becker@illinois.gov. Please feel free to forward this update to other interested resource providers and key stakeholders.

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